

National ID numbering system under way

Each exam administration, about 30,000 candidates sit for the NCEES Fundamentals and the Principles and Practice examinations. Yet NCEES has had no consistent way of tracking who these candidates are. A central clearinghouse to track candidate identification numbers has not existed. Until now, that is.

NCEES is currently putting the National ID Exchange into operation. This national identification numbering system located on the NCEES CouncilNet site will allow Member Boards to identify repeat candidates.

Currently, boards track applicants to their jurisdictions only. Each board has its own system of identification, and there is no effective means of tracing examinees across jurisdictions. This could potentially compromise the integrity of the exams.

For example, an examinee suspected of violating NCEES exam regulations in one jurisdiction could apply, qualify, and sit for an NCEES exam in another jurisdiction. An unethical examinee could take an NCEES exam multiple times with the sole purpose of gathering exam questions to distribute, sell for profit, or share in chat rooms.

In 2003, the Examination Security Task Force recommended several measures to limit the number of times a candidate can take an exam. The Council adopted these at the 2004 Annual Meeting. The first approved motion is a change to the *Model Law*, stating that candidates who have passed an exam may not retake that same exam unless required by a Member Board. The second is an addition to the *Model Rules*. It says that applicants who fail three or more attempts of the same NCEES exam must now submit an application to be readmitted to future administrations of the same exam. If readmitted, they must wait at least 11 months before retaking the exam. At the end of the waiting period, an

applicant may take the exam only once every calendar year.

The Examination Security Task Force recommended creating this unique national numbering system to provide a way to make these new policies enforceable and effective. Jurisdictions will be able to track how many times an applicant has applied for, taken, and failed an exam. The new system will display the candidate's ID number, jurisdiction in which he or she has taken an exam, and date of each administration. Licensing boards will be able to search by jurisdiction or by the

national ID number. The results will display anybody who has taken an exam three times or more.

It will take three exam administrations to gather the necessary information to be able to provide a trend analysis of repeat takers. NCEES staff will extract information from the October 2004 exams in

December. After the April and October 2005 administrations, enough information will be in the database to tell a story. Details about how to use the National ID Exchange will be sent to all Member Boards early next year.

Council communication

The primary goal of *Licensure Exchange* is to provide a forum for the exchange of information, opinions, and ideas regarding the licensure of professional engineers and surveyors. We would like to hear from you to find out if this newsletter is meeting your expectations. Please turn to page 11 of this issue, and complete the short reader poll. It should take just a few minutes of your time and will provide us with a great deal of useful information about your wishes. Your voice is a key to this publication's success.

Betsy Browne
 NCEES Executive Director



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 NCEES Executive Director

This unique national numbering system will provide a way to make new policies enforceable and effective.

NCEES takes steps to ensure fiscal accountability

Several states already have legislation pending that would extend the Sarbanes-Oxley Act provisions to cover nonprofits. By acting rather than reacting, NCEES puts itself in a better position of complying fully when the provisions are required.

In 2002, Congress passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in response to the corporate accounting scandals of Enron, Arthur Andersen, and others. The act's major focus is to hold the board of directors and top management of publicly traded companies directly responsible for guaranteeing that their accounting systems are clean and free of material errors.

Almost all of the act's provisions apply only to publicly traded companies—not nonprofits such as NCEES. Yet the NCEES Board of Directors recently decided to implement several provisions of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and to investigate putting others into practice. Why is NCEES doing this if it's not required to do so?

"I see two basic reasons for NCEES to consider adopting some of the act's provisions," says David Cox, who is chair of the Committee on Finances and also a C.P.A. "First, some of the elements make good business and governance sense and would be beneficial as best-practices procedures. Second, if nonprofits do not step forward to govern their own organizations, state and/or federal governments will. In fact, some state attorneys general are considering legislation with elements similar to Sarbanes-Oxley to govern nonprofits."

"NCEES will have to comply with these measures sooner or later. Several states already have legislation pending that would extend the Sarbanes-Oxley Act provisions to cover nonprofits," says NCEES Executive Director Betsy Browne. "By acting rather than reacting, NCEES puts itself in a better position of complying fully when the provisions are required."

Another reason is that a commitment to professional ethics defines the Council. NCEES provides leadership in licensure "through excellence in uniform laws, licensing standards, and professional ethics," according to its vision statement. These are ethics in the engineering and surveying professions, of course. But for NCEES to lead, it must also be accountable in how it operates internally.

"If anything, nonprofits are held to a higher responsibility," says NCEES Director of Finance Jeannie van der Zalm, C.P.A. "The very reason NCEES exists is to protect the public. Our Member Boards have to have the confidence that we are operating the way we should."

Important provisions of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act

Sarbanes-Oxley calls for corporations to have an independent board audit committee with at least one member with demonstrated financial expertise. The audit committee should select and communicate directly with the outside C.P.A. who performs the annual audit. The financial expert should not be anyone who conducts business with the corporation.

"An audit committee member (who must be a board member) with financial expertise as discussed in Sarbanes-Oxley is one of the cornerstones of the act," says Cox. "In fact, companies must disclose in their annual and financial reports whether they have a financial expert on the audit committee, and, if not, they must disclose the rationale behind their decision not to have such an expert."

Another important provision deals with financial disclosure. It calls for top executives to assess the strengths of internal controls within the organization and to affirm their effectiveness in writing.

Along the same lines, the act calls for a code of ethics to be adopted by the board of directors and financial managers.

Two sections of the act currently do apply to all corporations, including nonprofits. They deal with document retention and whistleblower protection. NCEES already has a document-retention policy in place, and it has developed a whistleblower policy that applies to NCEES staff.

How NCEES is addressing these issues

At the February 2004 meeting, the NCEES Board of Directors authorized several actions specific to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

NCEES will now develop an annual report that incorporates the audited financial statements and auditor opinions as well as a management statement attesting to the accuracy of reports and the adequacy of internal controls. The management statement will be signed by the NCEES president and treasurer and will provide full disclosure to the general public and the Audit Committee. This report will be sent to all Council members in January 2005.

84,567.92

422,784.32

The Board endorsed the following concepts and requested that they be forwarded to the Advisory Committee on Council Activities (ACCA) for study and to recommend a procedure for implementation subsequent to the 2005 Annual Meeting.

- ♦ Review and revise the document-retention and destruction policy already in place.
- ♦ Adopt a policy to protect whistleblowers from retaliation.
- ♦ Adopt a code of ethics for the NCEES Board that extends to all employees and, as required by law, members of the Council. Acknowledgment of whistleblower protection is to be included in the code of ethics.

ACCA's first charge for the 2004–2005 year includes all of these. It also includes a charge to

consider adding to the Board of Directors a member who has financial expertise as recommended by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. ACCA is also asked to recommend criteria for selecting such an individual and to identify the governance changes required.

Finally, the Board established an Audit Committee made up of the president, president-elect, treasurer, and executive director. This committee is charged with selecting an NCEES auditor and reviewing and reporting the results of the audit. The committee is also authorized to employ financial consultants as necessary to perform these functions. This committee began functioning earlier this year. ACCA is charged with codifying this new committee.

NCEES Staff

NCEES OPERATING SUMMARY
For the Period Ended September 30, 2004

	<u>Actuals</u> <u>Year-to-date</u>	<u>Budget</u> <u>Year-to-date</u>	<u>Budget</u> <u>Variance</u>	<u>2003–2004</u> <u>Total Budget</u>
INCOME				
Member Board Revenue	\$ 851,740	\$ 669,300	27.26%	\$ 669,300
Examination Revenue	5,513,705	5,614,830	–1.80%	5,614,830
Study Materials Revenue	793,740	1,034,850	–23.30%	1,034,850
Records Revenue	1,210,845	1,252,365	–3.32%	1,252,365
ELSES Revenue	<u>2,472,773</u>	<u>1,694,000</u>	<u>45.97%</u>	<u>1,694,000</u>
Total Income	\$ 10,842,803	\$ 10,265,345	5.63%	\$ 10,265,345
EXPENSES				
Member Board Expenses	\$ 1,700,728	\$ 1,907,662	–10.85%	\$ 1,907,662
Examination Expenses	4,984,396	5,525,598	–9.79%	5,525,598
Study Materials Expenses	589,537	686,666	–14.15%	686,666
Records Expenses	656,472	698,698	–6.04%	698,698
ELSES Expenses	<u>2,085,235</u>	<u>1,679,592</u>	<u>24.15%</u>	<u>1,679,592</u>
Total Expense	\$ 10,016,368	\$ 10,498,216	–4.59%	\$ 10,498,216
NET OPERATING INCOME (DEFICIT)	\$ 826,435	\$ (232,871)	–454.89%	\$ (232,871)

MESSAGE

Value of licensure appreciated by more than just professionals



Jon D. Nelson, P.E.
NCEES President

By sharing something about my father, I wanted to encourage you as he encouraged me. Although he and I were quite different, I learned much from him, even about how to be a professional.

At the Annual Meeting in Cleveland, I suggested that we—the members and staff of the state boards across our country—have a deeper understanding of the value of licensure than anyone else both inside and outside our professions. I suggested that we have a great opportunity for service, and I implied that what we do as engineers, surveyors, and regulators is often taken for granted by the public we serve. While I do believe these things to be true, there are members of the general public who do understand, people who encourage us to carry on and set examples for us to follow. I would like to tell you about one. He was my father, E.E. “Gene” Nelson.

I had the privilege of introducing several of my family members at the banquet in Cleveland, but I did not talk about my father. We lost him to cancer in 1993, about two years before my appointment to the Oklahoma state board. I know how proud he would have been about my involvement with the Oklahoma Board and the Council. I can assure you that had he been in Cleveland he would have had the time of his life mixing with engineers and surveyors.

In many ways my father and I were about as different as night and day. He did not finish high school; World War II called instead. He was blue collar—a gas-service man in northeast Kansas who for 35 years kept customers warm in the winter no matter how cold it got. He was a proud union man who participated in strikes several times as I grew up. He was a dyed-in-the-wool democrat who strongly believed it to be the “party for labor,” and in national elections he was an unabashed straight-ticket voter. He was a man who made a living for his family by using his hands, and although there were certain things we just did not talk about, he taught me to respect people regardless of their position and to find fulfillment by serving others.

Although my father was not a professional, he always held professionals, and engineers in particular, in very high esteem. It was the engineers in the gas company who would cross the picket lines to maintain the company during strikes, but he never held that against them. When I found myself in the same situation early in my career, he understood. It did not matter. Both sides had to do what they had to do.

He understood the responsibilities of professionals and appreciated their value. Even though he did not know how they did what they did, he understood what they produced. He knew he needed them so that he could take care of his customers: the people who would be in serious trouble if they did not have natural gas for heat in the dead of winter. To my father, work was a way to serve, and collaboration with engineers was an important part of the package.

My father's service also had a public side. He served for 12 years as chief of the local volunteer fire department. He made it his mission to make the fire department the best it could be. When I was growing up, if I wanted to find my father on a Saturday, all I had to do was walk down to the firehouse. He would be there, usually by himself, working on equipment or training sessions or route plans or who knows what. I still have people in my hometown tell me he was the best chief they ever had.

He later spent two terms on the city council. It was then that he and I had some of our best conversations. As a councilman, he was constantly dealing with engineering issues relating to infrastructure, and that was the area of engineering in which I practiced. In those discussions, I could see his deep appreciation for the problem-solving accomplished by engineers. That was when I really recognized his understanding and respect for licensure. The P.E. designation meant something to him. As a councilman, he relied on it.

So what is my point? Why did I want to share this with you? Two reasons. First, by sharing something about my father, I wanted to encourage you as he encouraged me. Although he and I were quite different, I learned much from him, even about how to be a professional. He understood the need for both labor and the professions and the importance for them to work together. He understood the value of engineers, and he understood the value of licensure. He also lived for service. I was serious in Cleveland when I said as board members we have a unique opportunity to serve the public. I hope you look at it that way, too. I also wanted to introduce you to my father—to fill a void I left in Cleveland. Thank you for your indulgence, and thank you for your service.

Committees charge forward

Their names can come across as a confusing string of acronyms: ACCA, EPP, EPE, EPS, UPLG, LQOG. But NCEES committees are anything but confused about their current goals. Their efforts are designed to meet the charges assigned by President Jon Nelson shortly after the Annual Meeting.

Committee charges determine where NCEES focuses its energies for the year. Charges build on past progress, such as continuing the efforts to ensure examination security. They break new ground, such as investigating new ways to address international issues. They ensure that the Council can properly operate, such as creating a responsible fiscal budget. Here are some of the charges that will challenge this year's committee members.

Scrutinizing exam content

The **Committee on Examinations for Professional Engineers (EPE)** and the **Committee on Examinations for Professional Surveyors (EPS)** are responsible for the content and scoring of all NCEES engineering and surveying examinations.

"The primary focus of EPE remains the engineering exams—how to continue to improve them, make them statistically repeatable in form and substance, and ensure that we are protecting the public and being fair to the applicants," says A.J.P. "Sonny" Launey, P.E., who is serving his first year as EPE chair. "We're focusing on a number of issues that deal specifically with exam content and form, as well as statistical information and how it's used both in determining the consistency of our exams and in establishing cut scores."

"EPE Charge 3 (how to use constantly changing codes and standards in the exams) and Charge 4 (investigate the possibility of using a PE reference handbook) are related," says Nelson. "The implementation of Charge 4 might solve the problem of Charge 3. Charge 3 is important because the issue can affect the credibility of our exams. Charge 4 is critical because of security concerns."

EPS will also investigate the feasibility of using a PLS reference handbook with the goal of standardizing information used by examinees and enhancing exam security. In addition, it will implement the new surveying specifications developed from the results of the recent Professional Activities and Knowledge Study.

"The major focus of an exam committee is always to produce high-quality exams on time," says Rita Lumos, P.L.S., who has served on EPS as a member or resource since 1997. This is her second year as chair. "EPS always has three versions of the exam under review to be used for the next three administrations. Because we have a new exam blueprint taking effect in October 2005, we're currently working with both the old and new specifications."

Defining minimum competency

The **Committee on Examination Policy and Procedures (EPP)** determines policies and procedures as they apply to the examination process. Committee members review the effectiveness of the examinations and recommend policies, specifications, and procedures consistent with the trends in the engineering and surveying professions.

One of this year's charges is to evaluate the level of difficulty and complexity of exam questions and provide a definition of the term "minimum competency" as it pertains to the licensure of engineers and surveyors, to compare this definition to those of other professions, and to consult with EPE and EPS as appropriate.

"The issue of defining minimum competency is one of extreme importance," says L. Robert "Larry" Smith, P.E., chair of EPP. "Some feel that the cut scores on the PE exams are too low because the exams may not be geared to determining just who are the minimally competent. If a working definition can be determined, this will be of great assistance to the exam committees."

Ensuring sound exams

The nature of the **Committee on Examination Audit** means that its charges are fairly similar from year to year. "The big thing for this committee is the audit itself," says Chuck Wallace, director of exam development and the committee liaison.

The main purpose of the committee is to ensure that recognized and accepted psychometric standards for licensing purposes continue to be used and met. This year, the committee will audit the most recent administration of the Environmental, Fire Protection, Nuclear, Structural II, Agricultural, and Mechanical PE exams.

Continued on next page

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Council shall be to provide an organization through which state boards may act and counsel together to better discharge their responsibilities in regulating the practice of engineering and land surveying as it relates to the welfare of the public in safeguarding life, health, and property. The Council also provides such services as may be required by the boards in their mandate to protect the public.

Constitution Article 2, Section 201

Strengthening security

Some committee charges stem from the recent exam security audit report recommendations. One of these is for EPE and EPS to each investigate and provide recommendations for the maximum number of times an item should be used on an exam before the item is made inactive. They are also charged with recommending whether NCEES should use multiple forms or versions of exams in each administration. In addition, EPP is charged with recommending a process to conduct a cheating analysis after each administration of NCEES exams and develop rules for interpreting data from the NCEES random-guessing program.

Addressing calculator questions

A recurring security challenge is the issue of calculators in the exam room. “Among other things, we’re charged to again consider the feasibility of developing items that can be answered without the use of a calculator,” says Lumos. “The calculator issue is a very difficult one. The committee has reviewed the last few administrations of the FLS and PLS exams and discovered that those exams are not currently completely calculator dependent. A large percentage of the items relate to the legal principles of surveying and do not require a calculator. [Last year’s] committee felt very strongly that a certain percentage of each exam should require a basic scientific calculator. Security concerns have brought the issue back for further consideration.”

The **Examination Administration Task Force** will also tackle calculator issues. It will review Exam Policy 15 as amended by the Council during this year’s Annual Meeting and consider adding the words “or supplied” to the policy so that it reads “Only models of calculators as specified or supplied by NCEES are permitted in the examination room.” The task force members will also revise exam policies to minimize objects allowed in the exam room and maximize security.

“We assist the exam committees on special projects and how we can help them carry out their charges,” says Rosemary Brister, chair of this special task force. “One of our major focuses will be on exam security and how to assess ELSEs and non-ELSEs states. Another major charge is how to develop and use a centralized registration system for all examinees.”

Clarifying what it means to offer professional services

The **Committee on Uniform Procedures and Legislative Guidelines (UPLG)** is charged with the upkeep of the *Model Law* and *Model Rules*. The committee has 18 charges this year. Most are designed to keep the *Model Law/Rules* up to date with changes in the needs of the engineering and surveying communities.

Several other charges may be more controversial and require more input, according to Claude Baker, P.E., S.E., L.S., who is serving his third year on the committee and his first year as chair.

One of these is to define what constitutes the “offering of professional services” as contained in the *Model Law*. “The problem of out-of-state engineers soliciting work has been with us for a long time,” says Baker. “It’s a problem on both sides of the state line. How do you solicit legally, and how do you control it? Perhaps we can come up with some language to ease the problem.”

Defining responsible charge

UPLG will also define how responsible charge is achieved when services are performed outside the United States by nonlicensed individuals and then reviewed and certified by a professional engineer or surveyor. Many U.S. engineering firms use the services of engineering firms outside the country.

“How does an engineer in Ohio (or Utah or Texas or wherever) take responsibility for work done by an engineer in India? How is this different from ‘plan stamping’? How do you ‘supervise’ someone in an office thousands of miles away? If this is done electronically, is this any different than supervising an employee in the corner office who sends you work product only by computer?” asks Baker. “These are interesting questions, and I’m sure we’ll have some challenges with them.”

“The current model definition of responsible charge is very brief and open to many interpretations,” adds Nelson. “Also, enforcement of responsible charge has always been difficult for Member Boards. Adding the relatively new practice of off-shoring engineering activities to low-cost and nonlicensed engineers who reside halfway around the world has raised the stakes.”

Writing language for Model Law and Model Rules

Two other UPLG charges result from Licensure Qualifications Oversight Group motions that passed at the 2004 Annual Meeting. Now UPLG is tasked with providing the language for them in modifying the *Model Law* and/or *Model Rules*. The first is to allow applicants to attain credit for experience gained while working under the supervision of an unlicensed engineer in an environment that is not subject to licensure requirements.

“Most states have an industrial exemption that allows major industries to perform engineering for their own work using unlicensed engineers. Some of these large industrial firms do work that affects the public. NCEES, many professional organizations, and most licensed engineers would, of course, like to have all of these engineers licensed,” Baker says. “A problem exists, however, that when engineers from these

industries apply for a license and have work experience only under an employer who is not licensed, they have no way to obtain qualifying experience.”

UPLG will also recommend language to incorporate a waiver of the FE exam for applicants who possess a degree from an EAC/ABET program or its equivalent and a Ph.D. or doctorate in engineering from an institution that offers EAC/ABET programs. The Council passed this motion at this year’s Annual Meeting as well.

Studying the disparity issue

The **Education/Accreditation Task Force** was appointed to study the specific issues and areas of concern of the current education/accreditation system and the impact these issues have on the education requirements of the licensure process.

One of its major charges is to continue investigating factors that contributed to low pass rates of the graduates of the 28 accredited programs examined in 2003–2004 and better define the disparity issue. The task force will compare these factors with the same factors of 10 programs with a 90 percent or better pass rate and 10 programs with an 80–89 percent pass rate.

It will also review Council position statements for consistency with the definition of “or equivalent” as amended by the Council at the 2004 Annual Meeting.

Recommending additional education requirements

The **Licensure Qualifications Oversight Group** was appointed to review and assess the work product of the Engineering Licensure Qualifications Task Force and to develop recommendations for consideration by NCEES. This year, it will recommend revisions to the *Model Law* to require additional engineering education for the purpose of licensure.

“This charge is as important as it is difficult,” says Nelson. “The Council, by its 2004 vote to approve the concept, made a statement that engineering education is not heading in a direction consistent with the needs of licensure and licensed practice. Developing a clear definition of what is needed will be very difficult. ASCE has been working on this same question for civil engineers over the last four years. They have made great strides but still have a long way to go. This charge will take some time.”

Standardizing law enforcement

The **Committee on Law Enforcement** receives comments and suggestions from Member Boards in connection with state board regulatory functions such as adjudication procedures and rules of professional conduct. This year, it will study and provide recommendations for developing an enforcement reference resource that would include the *Investigation and Enforcement Guidelines* and other relevant materials.

“The charges relating to standardizing law enforcement practices are critical,” says Nelson. “The more I travel the country, the more I realize how much the enforcement activities are scrutinized by practitioners, firms, and politicians. Law enforcement is an important part of licensure, and it must be performed well if licensure is to maintain its credibility.”

Continuing Council activities

Several other committees focus on the business of keeping Council activities running smoothly. The **Committee on Finances** is one of these.

“Our committee deals with finances, which is the fuel that runs all the services the Council provides to Member Boards,” says David Cox, C.P.A., who is serving as the committee chair. “Our major focus will be the development of the recommended budget for 2005–2006. The most challenging part will be reviewing projected exam revenue and expenses for future years to determine whether or not increases in exam prices are warranted. We must balance the Council’s financial needs with those of the Member Boards and make recommendations as far in advance as possible. The key in this area and all financial areas is to avoid surprises.”

Other committees address Council policy. The **Advisory Committee on Council Activities (ACCA)** provides advice and briefing to the Board of Directors on new policy issues, problems, and plans that warrant preliminary assessment of policy choices and procedures. Two of its major charges this year deal with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. (For more about ACCA activities related to Sarbanes-Oxley, turn to page 2.) Another significant charge is to consider actions taken by the Council during the 2004 Annual Meeting to segregate exam policies between exam development and exam administration and the need and desire for the creation of a standing committee to assume responsibility for exam administration. It will provide recommendations for Council consideration at the 2005 Annual Meeting.

Three other committees have straightforward charges relating to ongoing Council business. The **Committee on Constitution and Bylaws** develops appropriate language for recommended changes to the *Constitution and Bylaws*. The **Committee on Awards** canvasses the Member Boards for nominations for awards to be given at the Annual Meeting. The **Committee on Nominations** solicits nominations from the zones for the NCEES president-elect, treasurer, and new committee members. It will submit a slate of officers for the 2005–2006 administrative year at next year’s Annual Meeting.

NCEES Staff

MESSAGE



Martin A. Pedersen, L.S.
NCEES President-Elect

Many states limit the terms of the appointees for state boards. That's why it's important to think about volunteering for committees or running for Council office early in your appointment.

Get involved in Council leadership

NCCEES is a member organization made of licensing boards in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Each Member Board consists of licensed professional engineers, licensed professional surveyors, and public members. Assisting them are associate members—executive directors, attorneys, investigators, and staff who run the offices.

NCEES is governed by a board of directors made up of the president, president-elect, past president, treasurer, and four zone vice presidents. The zones nominate the president-elect on a rotating basis at their interim meetings. Delegates then elect the president-elect at the Annual Meeting. He or she serves three years on the Board of Directors—first as president-elect, then as president, and finally as past president. The treasurer, a two-year position, is also elected by the entire Council at the Annual Meeting, but the office but does not rotate among the zones. Member Boards elect the vice presidents for two-year terms during the interim zone meetings.

Leadership responsibilities

The office of president-elect involves considerable travel and meetings. This position requires at least four years of service on a Member Board and previous attendance at two Annual Meetings. Prior service as a zone vice president, treasurer, or both, and experience on one of the exam committees are a good foundation for this position.

The treasurer has the responsibility of attending the Annual Meeting, three Board meetings, and a budget session and of serving as liaison to the Committee on Finances.

Zone vice president responsibilities include attending the Annual Meeting and three additional Board meetings, serving as a liaison to one or two committees that meet once or twice a year, and running the zone's annual and interim meetings.

The Council's daily operations are run by the executive director and a staff of almost 60 at Council headquarters in Clemson, S.C. The executive director is a full-time NCEES employee who serves as secretary of the Board of Directors.

Early involvement is key

Now, where do you fit in? The Council relies exclusively on licensed engineers and surveyors who volunteer to write questions, prepare exams, and continuously monitor the quality of the examinations. All other committees of the Council—the standing committees and the special committees and task forces—are also made up of volunteers, not only Member Board members but associate members as well. Some of these committees meet only by conference call or e-mail, some once a year face to face, and some twice a year face to face. Even though we currently have more volunteers than committee assignments, we still need many volunteers to prepare Professional Activities and Knowledge Studies, conduct cut-score workshops, and write exam items.

Many states limit the terms of the appointees for state boards. That's why it's important to think about volunteering for committees or running for Council office early in your appointment. It's also important for boards to promote their members to committee and leadership positions.

Getting involved in Council activities within the first year of being appointed to your board is an excellent way to gain more insight into the process of examinations and licensing. When you work on one of the exam committees or subcommittees, you can share your knowledge and in many cases learn more about your profession. Working with some of the other committees can also give you a great understanding of the problems faced in writing legislation to regulate engineering and surveying.

Many Council volunteers become involved early in their terms and continue as emeritus members after their terms expire. Their experience and institutional memory are invaluable. In fact, some committees require several years of continuous service to become a chair or subcommittee chair.

Getting involved early also gives you the opportunity to run for a position on the Board of Directors. Emeritus members are not eligible to run for election. A candidate must be serving on a Member Board in the year he or she is elected. If elected, though, he or she can serve the full term

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FORUM

USCIEP task force and visa applications

We found your article “USCIEP seeks more stringent validation of visa applicant credentials” in the August issue very interesting. We would like to point out some issues that could clarify some aspects, especially those applicable to Latin American countries and signatories and those not of NAFTA.

We are an agency providing guidance and consulting services for professionals seeking U.S. registration to perform activities under current regulations imposed not only by U.S. laws but also by the state boards. One of our advanced programs is the Engineering Registration and Licensure for United States. The biggest concern for us is to assure honesty, professional backgrounds, and ethics of candidates before we start any of the steps towards registration. To ensure this, we verify all kinds of records of the candidates—not only academic records but also professional records, employee records, and, in many cases, police records. We also go further by investigating some of their life standards. The first issues about which we inform licensing-interested parties are the examinations, laws and rules of state boards, and, of course, our rules for acceptance as one of our candidates.

Another important issue is that most of the state boards require evaluations of education credentials for all studies followed in the country of origin and for graduate studies not followed or accredited in the United States. We believe that besides ECEI there are agencies with high standards performing those services, specifically Josef Silny & Associates Inc., which is a professional agency that imposes ABET standards for engineering programs. In fact, many of our evaluations are performed by JS&A. We have found their evaluations to be reliable and accepted by the boards. Their procedures are also stringent since all of the original academic grades and transcripts of candidates must be directly submitted by the universities to their offices, avoiding fake documents.

Finally, under NAFTA, the Trade NAFTA (TN) visas are granted for a “temporary entry” into “service commerce structures.” Mexicans and Canadians must comply with those specific requirements as stated in the article, but in a way that follows NAFTA guidelines for the TN visa applicants. The regulation requires that “degrees, diplomas, or certificates received by the TN applicant from an educational institution outside of the United States, Canada, or Mexico must be accompanied by an evaluation by a reliable credentials evaluation service specializing in evaluating foreign documentation.” It makes crucial the use of

agencies as JS&A or ECEI since they require original documents to be directly presented by the universities.

Our last consideration is that Colombia is not yet a NAFTA signatory country. Our government is in the middle of a negotiation that will end by March 2005. For this reason, the visa is required at the beginning of the process for all our candidates. We don't process visa applications. We feel confident that our imposed work schema at least guarantees that a good percentage of professionals we help for the P.E. process in the United States are not only good engineers but also good people with values that can comply with minimum requirements to perform P.E. activities.

As an organization that encourages professional licensure of engineers, we can support the task force in its concerns regarding foreign engineers arriving in the United States. In this respect, our experience shows that Latin American engineers can be not only warned about engineering standards, regulations, and laws for professional practice in the United States but can also be prepared to follow them by assuming the challenge to pursue a P.E. license.

Eng. Miguel Pineda

Technical Director

Professional License Consulting Group

Bogotá, Colombia, South America

Editor's note: *Mr. Pineda's letter states there are other credential evaluation services besides ECEI that evaluate credentials for compliance with EAC/ABET standards. NCEES and USCIEP are aware that other companies exist and that several U.S. engineering licensing boards accept their evaluations. The article was not intended to endorse or to discredit any particular credentials evaluation service. Rather, the USCIEP Security Task Force is stating that the current evaluation system employed by the government could be inadequate, and, if so, this insufficient system could be exposing the public to substandard engineering practice. The task force is focusing on procedures, not specific companies.*

Second, the statement that the TN visa regulation requires that “degrees, diplomas, or certificates received by the TN applicant ... must be accompanied by an evaluation by a reliable credentials evaluation service specializing in evaluating foreign documentation” is the type of information the task force hopes to discover. Further investigation is warranted to learn how “reliable” is defined and what standards, criteria, and procedures are being used by the evaluation services that are deemed reliable.

Send letters to *Licensure Exchange* editor at NCEES, P.O. Box 1686, Clemson, SC 29633 or kanderso@ncees.org.

Please include your name and state of residence on the letter. Letters may be edited for clarity, brevity, and readability.

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NEWS

ALABAMA

- ◆ The board's Web site address has changed to www.bels.alabama.gov.

ALASKA

- ◆ The board's Web site address has changed to www.commerce.state.ak.us/occ/pael.htm. Nancy Hemenway's new e-mail address is nancy_hemenway@commerce.state.ak.us.

FLORIDA PE

- ◆ Paul Martin is the new executive director. His e-mail address is pmartin@fbpe.org. He replaces Carrie Flynn, who was serving as acting Member Board administrator.

HAWAII

- ◆ Ken Ota is the new chair of the board. Oscar Portugal has been reappointed to the board, and Richard Suzuki is a new appointee. The terms of Ted Garduque, Lester Inouye, and Arnaldo Prepose have expired.

INDIANA PE

- ◆ Anne Rearick is a new appointee to the board.

LOUISIANA

- ◆ The e-mail address for executive secretary H. Glen Kent Jr. is hgkent@lapels.com.

NEW HAMPSHIRE LS

- ◆ John Myhaver is a new appointee to the board. The term of Mark Stevens has expired.

NORTH CAROLINA

- ◆ The board's new mailing address is 4601 Six Forks Rd., Suite 310, Raleigh, NC 27609. Its new phone number is 919-791-2000 (all extensions are the same), and its fax number is 919-791-2012.

RHODE ISLAND PE

- ◆ L. Robert "Larry" Smith was reappointed to the board for a five-year term and will continue serving as chair. This is his fourth term on the board. He has been appointed by three different governors. Richard Bernardo is vice-chair, and Brian Moore is board secretary.

SOUTH CAROLINA

- ◆ Jan Simpson is the new board administrator. Her e-mail address is simpsonj@llr.sc.gov. Jay Pitts is no longer with the board.

VIRGINIA

- ◆ Nico De Leon, Cameron Stiles, and Kenneth Schwartz are new appointees to the board. The terms of David May, Ronald Helton, and Susan Orange have expired.

The President-Elect's Message (continued from page 8)

even if his or her term on the Member Board ends during that time.

NCEES needs you

If you are one of the "old hands" on your board, please take the time to initiate the new members to the Council and its many facets. Explain the benefits of committee membership and leadership to new members. This will help guide them early into becoming participants in Council activities.

Most members of Member Boards are people already dedicated to their professions and disciplines. A leadership position in the Council is another great way to commit to licensure, comity, and the protection of the public. The Council needs a constant stream of qualified and willing leaders. We need you to volunteer.

*Martin A. Pedersen, L.S.
NCEES President-Elect*

Reader Poll

We'd like to know more about what you're looking for in *Licensure Exchange* so that we can plan a newsletter that meets your needs. Please take a moment to answer the questions below. Then either **fax it to us at 864-654-6966**, or mail it to Editor, *Licensure Exchange*, NCEES, P.O. Box 1686, Clemson, SC 29633. If you prefer to answer the questions online, just go to www.ncees.org/readerspoll.

1. Please indicate your interest level in reading about the following topics:

	High	Medium	Low
Annual Meeting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Awards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Board of Directors' meetings/actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Committees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ELSES	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Examinations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pass rates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Security issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Law enforcement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member Board activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member Board updates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mobility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NCEES finances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NCEES Records program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other professional organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promotion of the professions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Splintering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Value of licensure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Zone meetings/activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Please rate *Licensure Exchange* in the following areas based on your perceptions of this past year's issues.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Relevance of content to my needs ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of content/information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Level of writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Readability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Please indicate your interest level in reading articles written by people in the following groups.

	High	Medium	Low	Does not matter
Board of Directors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Committees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Council staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Member Boards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other professional organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. How much of an issue do you typically read?

- All or almost all
- About 75%
- About 50%
- Less than half
- None

5. How much time do you typically spend reading an issue?

- 1–2 hours
- 30 minutes to 1 hour
- 15–30 minutes
- Less than 15 minutes

6. What happens to your copy of *Licensure Exchange* when you finish reading it?

- Save/file it for future reference
- Pass it along to others
- Discard it

7. Please estimate the number of people other than yourself who read your copy of *Licensure Exchange*.

Fill in number: _____

8. Please list three topics that you would like to see featured in *Licensure Exchange* articles:

9. Age

- 21–29 50–59
- 30–39 60–69
- 40–49 70 or older

10. Gender

- Male Female

11. Primary area of specialty

- Engineering
What area: _____
- Surveying
What area: _____
- Other: _____

12. Please write any additional comments or suggestions on how *Licensure Exchange* can be more responsive to your needs:

13. What other professional publications do you read?

- The Bent* (Tau Beta Pi) *Mechanical Engineer*
- Civil Engineering* (ASCE) NSBE
- Consulting Specifying Engineer* *Plant Engineering*
- Engineering Times* (NSPE) *POB* (Point of Beginning)
- Engineering, Inc.* (ACEC) *Prism* (ASEE)
- ENR* (Engineering News Record) *SHPE*
- Graduating Engineer* *Spectrum* (IEEE)
- Machine Design* *SWE Magazine*
- Other _____

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Upcoming

EVENTS

Here are some of next year's key dates.

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
February 10–12	Board Presidents'/MBA Assembly	Kansas City, Mo.
February 25–26	Board of Directors' Meeting	Napa Valley, Calif.
April 7–9	Joint Central/Northeast Zone Meeting	Washington, D.C.
April 15	PE/PS Exam Administration	
April 16	FE/FS Exam Administration	
May 5–7	Southern Zone Meeting	Oklahoma City, Okla.
May 17–19	Board of Directors' Meeting	Anchorage, Alaska
May 19–21	Western Zone Meeting	Anchorage, Alaska
August 23	Board of Directors' Meeting	Memphis, Tenn.
August 24–27	NCEES Annual Meeting	Memphis, Tenn.

Is Licensure Exchange communicating what you want to know? Tell us what you think. Please complete the short reader poll inside, and fax it to us today.

Licensure
EXCHANGE

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